

NEWS

FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Taking Medications Safely

(NAPSA)—If you're over 65, caring for someone over 65, or expect to be, now is a good time to make smart choices about medications, especially prescription drugs.

It's important to tell your doctor if you have any drug allergies, to make sure your pharmacy has given you the exact drug prescribed by your doctor and to take the right dose at the right time. Something else to keep in mind: Getting older changes how you react to certain drugs, even those prescribed by doctors and those you've taken before.

In a study funded by the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, experts pointed to 33 prescription drugs that may produce potentially harmful effects in seniors, eleven of those drugs—including some sedatives, anti-anxiety medications, and anti-nausea drugs—are ones that experts say seniors should always avoid.

For your safety, consider the following:

- Talk to your doctor. Ask questions if you don't understand something.
- Be aware that you're at higher risk for side effects from certain drugs if you're over 65.
- Let your doctor know about all your health problems. Some drugs should be avoided by people with specific health problems.
- Be sure you understand why the doctor wants you to take a new medicine.
- Do not hesitate to ask your doctor about a prescription drug—even one that you have been taking for years.
- Keep a list of all the medications you take. Include how much



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to take, how often to take it and why you take it. Be sure to include all over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Even vitamins and supplements can interact with medications.

- Bring this list—or all your medicine and vitamin bottles—to your next doctor visit. Review it annually.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist questions about what side effects to expect and when to call them about side effects that are serious.
- Consider other options: instead of a pill to help you sleep, try a warm bath; instead of a pill to help you lose weight, exercise.
- Finally, never stop taking a drug without asking your doctor.

For more information on the study, see www.ahrq.gov/news/press/pr2001/prescrip.htm. For more information on being a well-informed health care consumer, go to <http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/pathqpack.htm>.